

Campus Climate Initiatives January, 2016

Conversations about campus climate in spring term, 2015, have led to a series of initiatives designed to address specific concerns articulated by students, faculty, and staff:

We are working to expand awareness and training for students—especially new students—about how we treat others, react to one another, and have hard but needed conversations. To this end, the 2015 New Student Week included a powerful and well-received session, “Engaging with Diversity and Difference,” designed by student leaders. We intend to repeat and enhance this session next fall. It is important to note that this program was put together by students on short notice when the initially-planned orientation program proved ineffective. This is a singular example of how much internal energy and passion Carleton can draw upon when we focus on prioritizing and articulating our community values. Dean of Students Carolyn Livingston is convening a faculty, staff, and student team—the Expanding Awareness and Training Work Group—to provide recommendations on expanding awareness and trainings not only during new student week, but across the span of the student experience.

Additionally, **we need to do better at equipping faculty with the tools and knowledge they need to facilitate difficult conversations in the classroom.** There have been two groups engaged in these conversations: (1) a group of faculty convened by the Dean of the College Bev Nagel studying best practices and disseminating resources via the Perlman Learning and Teaching Center (LTC) web site; and (2) a Community, Equity, and Diversity Initiative (CEDI) Work Group of faculty and students considering what inclusiveness in the classroom looks like. We expect the latter group to provide suggestions by the end of this academic year, while the former group will be ongoing

In the meantime, the LTC continues to sponsor a variety of events for faculty and staff on topics of diversity and campus climate, including a fall term session, “Making Class Welcoming for Transgender and Gender Non-Binary Students;” a January session, “Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault: Results & Next Steps;” and two popular winter term book groups focused on racial justice. Faculty leadership is also considering the topic of “difficult conversations” as the focus of the 2016 Faculty Retreat.

Additionally, as Carleton’s program of Critical Conversations courses continues, a new faculty-staff session was offered in the fall, and a second session is being planned for spring term. During the winter break, a workshop on Critical Conversations was held for faculty interested in joining the ranks of the coaches, teachers, or leaders of this program.

We seek to be clearer in articulating community values and expectations of behavior, particularly in the student-to-student context. At the end of winter term, we expect to receive the final recommendations of the Task Force empaneled by Dean Livingston and CSA President Marielle Foster to address the viability of a Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) at Carleton to facilitate a coordinated response to bias-related incidents and situations that may impact campus climate. If the working group concludes that a BIRT would be appropriate for Carleton, we would move swiftly to create such a body this academic year.

A separate CEDI Carleton Culture Work Group is studying how we currently communicate our values of inclusivity and appreciation for diversity (for instance, on our web site and in campus publications) and how we can more proactively embody our commitment to diversity. We expect recommendations from both of these groups by the end of spring term.

We need to have a clear Sexual Misconduct Policy and educate our community about the process for responding to infractions. New, stronger, [sexual misconduct policies](#) were adopted by the College Council and the Board of Trustees last spring. Sexual Misconduct Policy training sessions for faculty, staff, and students have been occurring throughout the summer and fall and will continue into winter term. This fall we also launched a [“Green Dot” training pilot](#), a nationally-recognized bystander intervention program that focuses on building the skills for individuals to take action when they see a risk of possible sexual assault or sexual misconduct. By 2016-17, Green Dot training and events will be open to the entire Carleton community.

Beyond those two work groups, we will continue to have thoughtful ongoing discussions regarding community values and expectations.

Dean Livingston has also tasked a group to **identify opportunities and challenges of first-generation and low-income students**, conveying observations and ideas by the end of spring term. While we have long celebrated the success of programs such as TRIO and POSSE and more recently, Questbridge Scholars, we seek to further enhance the experiences of all first-generation and low-income students at Carleton.

We are also considering whether we have the best organizational structures in place to support and maintain a healthy campus climate. A third CEDI Work Group is reviewing CEDI’s role and impact, and the College’s senior administrative leadership team is reviewing best organizational practices, structures, and staffing for accomplishing this work.

Campus climate is of critical importance if we are to maintain and enhance the learning environment at Carleton. As we aspire for this college to support the full potential of all its community members, we expect additional initiatives to emerge.